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ZUR GESCHICHTE UND LITTERATUR DES URCHRISTENTHUMS. III,
1: *Untersuchungen über den Brief des Paulus an die Römer.*
Von FRIEDRICH SPITTA. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901. Pp. 193. M. 5.

THE fact that scholars, irrespective of their dogmatic position, still differ regarding the purpose, the integrity, and the readers of the letter to the Romans, is Professor Spitta's justification for this volume. He presents certain novelties in explaining the structure of the letter, but at the same time claims that the best previous investigators have prepared the way for his conclusions.

Briefly stated, his position is this: The epistle to the Romans consists of two letters, a longer, complete one, and a shorter, incomplete one. The letter is made up of chaps. 12:1—15:7 and 16:1—20. This shorter letter, which presupposes an acquaintance with the Roman church, was written after the imprisonment spoken of in Acts 28:30. In view of Acts 16:16, it is thought that Paul was making a general tour of the gentile churches when he wrote the letter. Since the first Roman imprisonment was not later than the spring of 63, and since the letter in its references to rulers makes no allusion to the Neronian persecution, its composition is to be placed in the period 63–64 A. D. To this period we are also led by the fact that 1 Peter is dependent upon this short letter, and 1 Peter antedates the Neronian persecution.

Spitta's view of the longer of the two letters that constitute our epistle to the Romans is still more novel. Starting from the difficulty of determining whether the readers were Jews or gentiles, he reaches the conclusion that this letter (1 Romans) is an adaptation to gentile Christians of a writing intended for believing Jews. The object of this writing was to justify his preaching to the gentiles a free gospel. It belongs in the time when Paul was founding the gentile church. The most important additions to this writing for Jewish believers are chaps. 11:11–36 and 15:8–13.

Spitta's hypothesis of 2 Romans plainly has more to commend it than has the hypothesis that 1 Romans is an adaptation of an earlier writing which was intended for Jewish Christians. It seems, however, questionable whether the phenomena which he seeks to explain are really as difficult as are the hypotheses which he offers for their explanation. The book is a good specimen of acute and minute literary analysis, and contains many significant remarks on the origin of Romans entirely apart from its main contention.

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